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DEPARTMENT OF AGING
Choice, Independence and Dignity for Older Marylanders

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Power Mostly Restored across Maryland as Heat Wave Persists

Cooling Centers Opened in Local Jurisdictions to Assist Those in Need

BALTIMORE, MD (July 5, 2012) – In the aftermath of last week's devastating storm, electricity has been restored to all but 6 percent of Maryland households, according to the Maryland Emergency Management Agency website. Nevertheless, State officials are bracing for the continuation of a heat wave that has persisted for nearly two weeks and claimed the lives of four people. The five-day forecast calls for temperatures reaching 100 degrees today through Saturday, and remaining above 90 degrees until the middle of next week. Local Area Agencies on Aging have responded by designating many senior centers around the State as cooling centers, able to provide water and ice and comfortable shelter from the extreme heat.

"Our priority is to spread the word and warn older adults of the dangers associated with heat and encourage them to take measures to protect themselves so they can have a safe, enjoyable summer," said Secretary of Aging Gloria Lawlah. "During these periods of extreme heat, I would also urge family members, caregivers and neighbors of older individuals to frequently check on them to make sure their homes are properly ventilated and cooled, and that they have adequate fluids and foods."

During the summer, it is important for older adults to remember that they are at particular risk for hyperthermia, a heat-related illness brought on by long periods of exposure to intense heat and humidity, which causes an increase in a person's core body temperature (98.6°)(37°C). The two most common forms of hyperthermia are *heat exhaustion* and *heat stroke*. Heat exhaustion is a warning that the body is getting too hot. The person may be thirsty, giddy, weak, uncoordinated, nauseous, sweating profusely and the skin is cold and clammy. Heat stroke is caused by excessive exposure to hot, humid temperatures kills an average of 1,700 persons in the United States each year. About 80% of heat stroke deaths occur in persons age 50 and older, because age and other factors such as disease, dehydration and medications diminish the ability of the body to compensate for increased core temperatures. A person with heat stroke has a body temperature above 104°F. Symptoms may include confusion, combativeness, bizarre behavior, faintness, staggering, strong rapid pulse, dry flushed skin, lack of sweating and possible delirium or coma. Immediate medical attention is essential when problems first begin.

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Here are some tips for keeping seniors safe in the summer heat:

- Drink plenty of liquids -- eight or more 8-ounce glasses per day and or fruit juices -- every day to stay hydrated.
- Avoid caffeinated and alcoholic beverages.
- Dress appropriately. Wear loose-fitting clothes in natural fabrics like cotton and dress in light colors that will reflect the sun and heat instead of darker colors that will attract them.
- When outdoors, protect your skin from damage by wearing hats, sunglasses and a sunscreen of 30 SPF or more.
- Stay indoors during extreme heat. Make sure you check in with family or friends everyday if you live by yourself.
- If you do not have air conditioning in your apartment, go somewhere that does. A movie theater, the mall, a friend or relative's home or a community senior center are all good options.
- If you need to get out of the house and don't drive a car, call a taxi, a friend or a transportation service. Do NOT wait outside for the bus in extreme heat.
- If you are absolutely unable to leave the house and do not have air conditioning, take a cool bath or shower to lower your body temperature on extremely hot days.
- Temperatures inside the home should not exceed 85 degrees Fahrenheit for prolonged periods of time.
- Know the signs of heat stroke (e.g. flushed face, high body temperature, headache, nausea, rapid pulse, dizziness and confusion) and take immediate action if you feel them coming on.

For updated information, visit the Department of Aging's website at www.aging.maryland.gov and its Facebook page at www.Facebook.com/MarylandDepartmentofAging.

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